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Security Council

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Letter dated 19 September 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from the President of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces dated 19 September 2013 in the context of the ongoing discussion of the Security Council of the situation in Syria (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ib **Petersen**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 19 September 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the people of Syria and the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, I have the honour to refer to the ongoing efforts by the Security Council to address the situation in Syria.

For the past 30 months, the Syrian people have been subjected to a vicious and systematic campaign of oppression. On a daily basis, thousands of civilians have faced death, injury, torture and unlawful detention. In seeking to destroy all opposition to its rule, the Syrian regime has used excessive and indiscriminate violence, including heavy artillery, ballistic missiles and cluster munitions, against Syria's civilian population.

On 21 August, the Syrian regime dramatically escalated its brutality, perpetrating the most devastating chemical weapons attack in recent history, which killed over 1,400 people, including more than 400 children. This heinous crime demonstrated that Assad is a dangerous threat, not only to his people, but to the peace and stability of the Middle East.

This week, on Monday, 16 September, the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic published its findings. It offered overwhelming and indisputable evidence that chemical weapons were used against the Syrian people and clearly showed that only the Syrian regime could have carried out these attacks.

The use of chemical weapons on a large scale against a civilian population is a grave violation of international law that must be addressed. The Coalition reminds the Council of the wider objective of eliminating weapons of mass destruction in all Middle Eastern countries and reiterates its firm condemnation of any use of chemical weapons, as well as its call for their complete elimination in Syria.

As a first step, the United Nations must take the necessary steps to disarm the Syrian regime of its chemical weapons by adopting a binding resolution that will prevent it from ever again using such weapons against its own people. For this disarmament to be meaningful, its must be comprehensive and immediate. Strict measures must be laid out to ensure continuous regime compliance. These are the standards that must be met to show that the United Nations is serious in its commitment to eradicating chemical weapons in Syria.

The United States and Russia agreed on a framework for the elimination of chemical weapons on 14 September which, despite our scepticism of the regime's promises, provides an opportunity for the Security Council to act. The Coalition urges the Council to authorize the use of all necessary measures to ensure that any non-compliance will have serious consequences, as provided for in chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. The Coalition would welcome such a binding resolution and offers its support on the ground for any mission determined to eliminate these heinous chemical weapons.

The Coalition will cooperate fully with the United Nations, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and other international personnel who will be responsible for dismantling the Syrian chemical weapons programme, including by working towards ensuring their security.

However, ending the regime's control of chemical weapons will not stop the violence in Syria. Further efforts are urgently required by the international community and the Security Council, in particular, to resolve the conflict in Syria and address the region's large and growing humanitarian crisis.

In discussing the situation in Syria, the Security Council has a crucial opportunity to reach agreement on terms that can accelerate a political resolution of the conflict. The Coalition therefore urges the Council to endorse the Geneva communiqué agreed upon by the Action Group for Syria in June 2012, as the fundamental basis for the creation of a transitional government framework in Syria.

In accordance with the terms of the communiqué, the Security Council must take the measures necessary to commit the Syrian regime to respect a complete cessation of violence and secure the release of the thousands of civilians currently held in prisons and detention centres. In addition, it must reaffirm the principles required for achieving a "genuinely democratic and pluralistic" future for Syria.

The Coalition reiterates its commitment to the Geneva communiqué and reaffirms its willingness to engage in a future Geneva conference to discuss how to secure the communiqué's implementation. For such a conference to succeed, all parties must declare their complete support for the terms of the communiqué and agree that the purpose of the conference will be the establishment of a transitional government with "full executive powers", created on the basis of "mutual consent".

The Security Council must also intensify its efforts to hold the perpetrators of all war crimes in Syria accountable, especially those who committed the chemical weapons attacks on 21 August 2013. The Syrian Coalition therefore repeats its request for the Council to refer Syria to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, to bring the culture of impunity in Syria to an end.

Mr. President, over 100,000 Syrians have already lost their lives. As long as this war is allowed to continue, thousands more will die. The risk of violence spilling over Syria's borders and increasing regional instability is likely to grow. Without intensifying efforts to stop this conflict, the moral authority of the United Nations will continue to decline while the region's humanitarian catastrophe, which has already disrupted the lives of millions of Syrians, worsens.

The Syrian Coalition therefore calls upon the Security Council to do its utmost to adopt a comprehensive resolution that will stop the conflict in Syria and create the conditions for a democratic transition.

I would be most grateful if you would share this letter with the members of the Security Council in the context of the Council's deliberations on Syria.

(*Signed*) Ahmad **al-Jarba**
President of the Syrian Coalition